

Amendments to the Specification:

[0001] The present invention relates to a new process for introducing functional groups on a large ~~varieties~~ variety of polysaccharides by using free radical generation.

[0005] More recently, ~~also~~ the crosslinking route was investigated. In WO 01/30407, for example, a polyvinyl alcohol solution in water, containing natural polymers, can be cross-linked using high-energy irradiation to form hydrogels for use in the medical field; the products obtained by this process are described as having qualities of sterility, transparency, cooling effect, biocompatibility, oxygen permeability, absorption, humid environment.

[0008] However a significant drawback of the esterified and etherified functional derivatives that ~~matces~~ makes them less attractive from a practical viewpoint is the low stability of ester bonds: in fact they are cleaved under alkaline conditions, as usually happens by repeated laundry, especially with strong detergents.

[0026] The choice of the olefin compound depends on the functionalization to be introduced. The amount of olefin compound introduced in the second step of the process, depends directly on the desired lengths of the ~~the~~ oligomeric chain that will be attached to the polysaccharide chain.